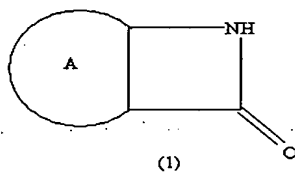


Amendment to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

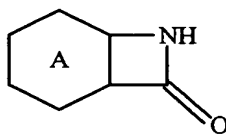
Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A process for the preparation of an enantiomerically enriched β -lactam, which comprises enantioselective hydrolysis of the corresponding racemic β -lactam in the presence of a lactamase enzyme capable of enantioselective hydrolysis of 3-azatricyclo[4.2.1.0^{2,5}] non-7-en-4-one and 7-azabicyclo[4.2.0]oct-4-en-8-one wherein the enantioselective hydrolysis occurs over a period of less than 48 hours.
2. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the lactamase enzyme is in isolated and purified form.
3. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the lactamase enzyme is in the form of a cell paste or intact cells.
4. (Original) A process according to any preceding claim, which additionally comprises isolation of the enantiomerically enriched β -amino acid produced by hydrolysis.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Original) A process according to any preceding claim, wherein the lactam is a fused polycyclic compound of the type represented by formula (1)



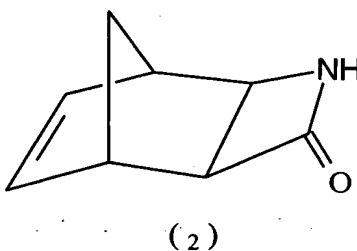
wherein ring A is any monocyclic or any polycyclic ring, optionally substituted with one or more non-interfering groups.

7. (Original) A process according to claim 6, wherein the lactam has the formula

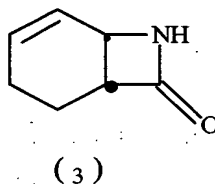


wherein ring A is unsaturated and optionally also bridged or further fused.

8. (Original) A process according to claim 7, wherein the lactam is 3-azatricyclo[4.2.1.0^{2,5}]non-7-en-4-one (2)



9. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein the lactam is 7-azabicyclo[4.2.0]oct-4-en-8-one (3)



10. (Original) A process according to any preceding claim, wherein the lactamase enzyme is obtainable from a microorganism having the characteristics of that available as the *Rhodococcus globerulus* strain identified as CMC 103381, Accession No. NCIMB 41042.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

16. (Canceled)

17. (Canceled)

18. (Canceled)